



## ISSUE BRIEF

# State Health Agency Workforce

State health agencies serve a critical function in promoting and protecting the health of the citizens in their jurisdiction. To do so, they must have a workforce of sufficient size that is comprised of individuals with diverse backgrounds and skills. *The ASTHO Profile of State Public Health, Volume Three*, provides the most current data on the state health agency workforce.

## Size and Scope of State Health Agency Workforce

### Number of State Health Agency Employees

In 2012, 49 state health agencies reported having a total of 97,127 full-time equivalents (FTEs). Based on these figures, the estimated total number of FTEs for all states and the District of Columbia is approximately 101,000. This represents a decline of approximately 5,500 FTEs from 2010.

States with smaller population sizes tend to have fewer FTEs, while larger states tend to have a greater number. However, a state's size is inversely related to the number of full-time equivalents in its state health agency per 100,000 population, such that smaller states have the highest number of FTEs per 100,000 population on average, while larger states have the lowest number of FTEs per 100,000 population on average; a map outlining the number of FTEs per 100,000 population by state is included on the following page.

### Occupational Classifications at State Health Agencies

Given the breadth of activities and functions performed by state health agencies, their employees fulfill a variety of roles that span a number of occupational classifications. The occupational classifications at state health agencies with the highest average number of full-time

equivalent staff are administrative and clerical staff (average of 396 FTEs), public health nurses (average of 224 FTEs), and environmental health workers (average of 117 FTEs).

## State Health Agency Demographics

### Age and Length of Service

The average age of employees at state health agencies is 47; the median age is 48. Among new employees at state health agencies, the average age was 40 for FY09 and FY10 and 41 in FY11. The average number of years of service by a state health agency employee is 12.

### Gender, Race, and Ethnicity

According to the Profile Survey, on average 71 percent of state health agency employees are female.

The ASTHO Profile Survey collected data on state health agency employee race and ethnicity for the first time in 2012. Forty-one states responded with data about the ethnicity of their employees. On average, nearly three-quarters of all state health agency employees are white, with the next largest percentage being black/African-American (15%) and 5 percent being Hispanic/Latino. Overall, state health agencies are more racially diverse than the U.S. population and have a smaller proportion of Hispanics/Latinos than the overall U.S. population.

## Union Representation

Union membership among employees varies considerably across state health agencies, ranging from a low of 3 percent to a high of 100 percent. Of the 29 states that reported percentages for collective bargaining, on average 70 percent of employees are represented by a union.

## Vacancies and Retirements

In FY11, an average of 274 nontemporary employees separated from state health agencies. In 2012, on average 12 percent of positions at state health agencies were vacant, representing on average 303 positions per state health agency. On average, states with larger populations had a greater percentage of positions vacant and number of vacant positions; a corresponding map with the percentage of positions vacant for each state is included

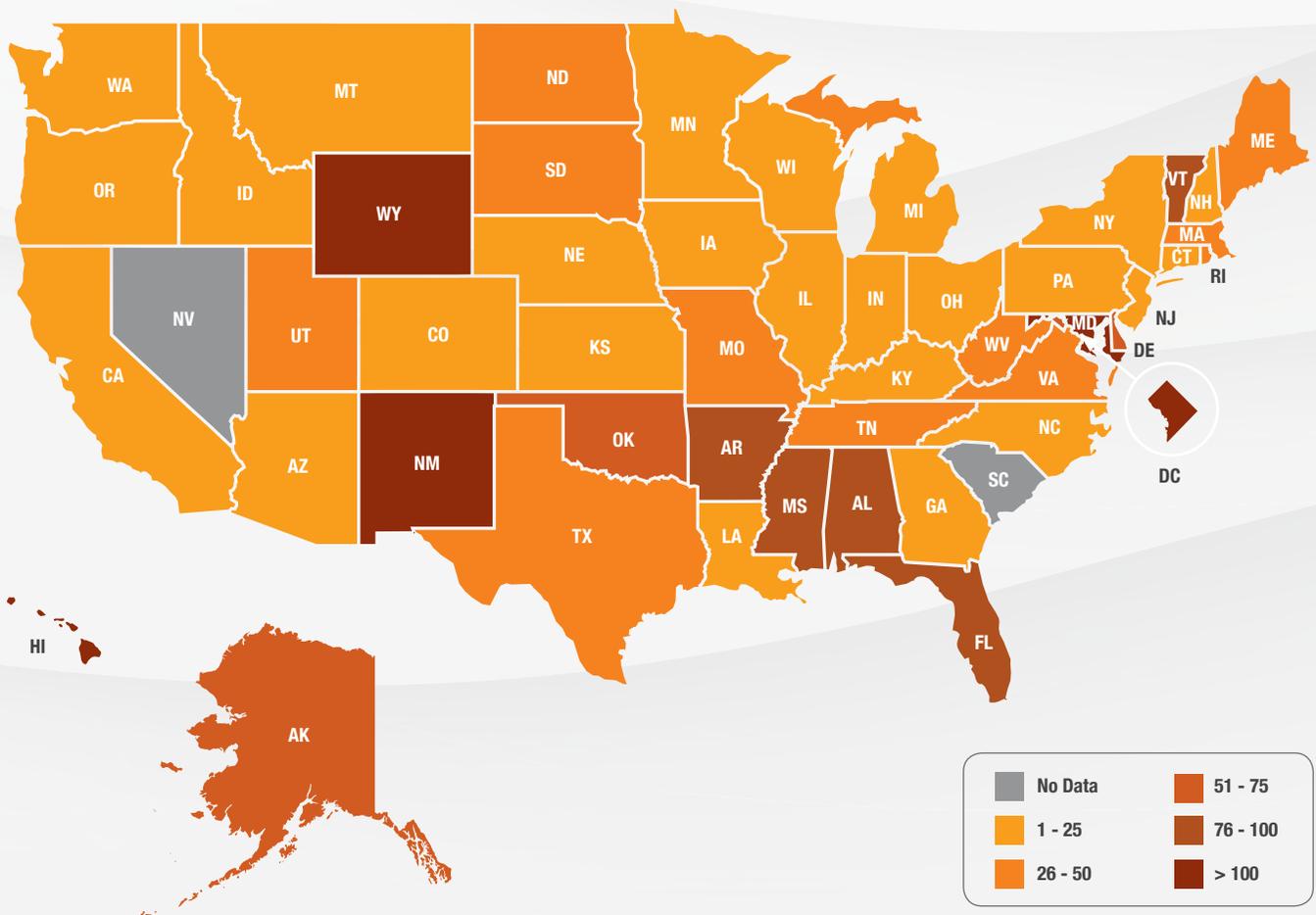
later in the brief. State health agencies are on average only actively recruiting for 24 percent of vacancies.

The projected percentage of employees eligible for retirement among states that responded to this survey item in both 2010 and 2012 is displayed on the last page of this issue brief. Among the 27 states that provided data in both 2010 and 2012, the percentage of employees eligible for retirement is expected to increase from 19 percent in FY10 to 26 percent in FY16.

## State Health Official Experience and Qualifications

A state health official serves as the leader of his or her state health agency. As of December 2012, the average length of time a state health official had been in his or her position was 3.4 years, with the median tenure

## Full-Time Equivalents per 100,000



being 1.8 years; the range of tenure was one month to 20 years. The average number of years of experience in public health prior to becoming a state health official was 16.4; 96 percent of state health officials had executive management experience before becoming the state health official.

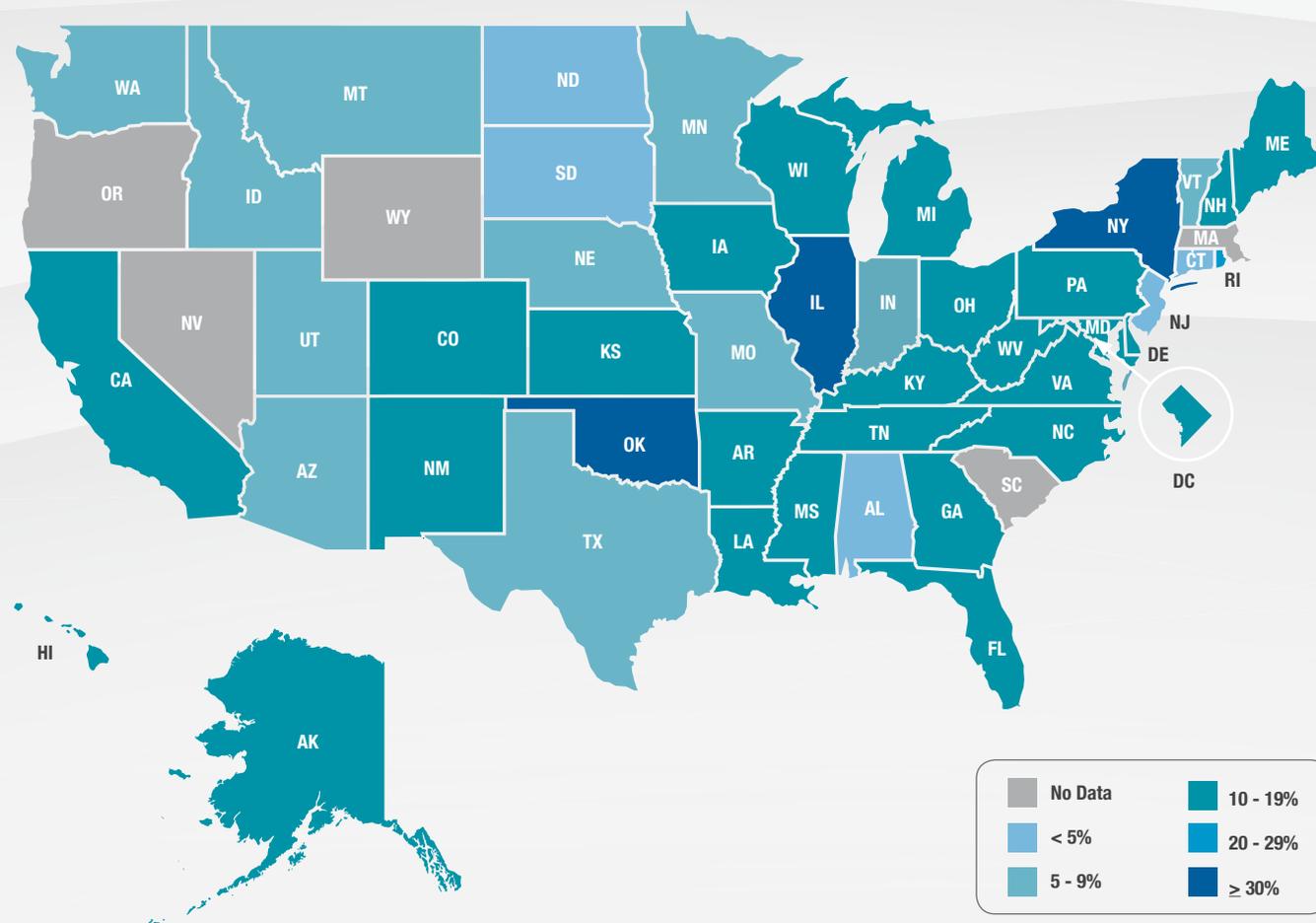
State health officials also have a diverse array of educational qualifications. Nearly three-quarters of state health officials in 2012 had an MD, which represents an increase of 6 percent from 2010; nearly half had an MPH, which represents an increase of 8 percent from 2010. Additionally, the percentage of state health officials with a DrPH increased from 2 to 6 percent from 2010 to 2012. In 2012, 20 state health officials (42%) had dual advanced degrees, with the most common combination being MD and MPH.

More than half of states (53%) have an official statutory requirement that the state health official possess an MD or DO. Nearly one-third (29%) of states report having no statutory requirements for the education level of the state health official.

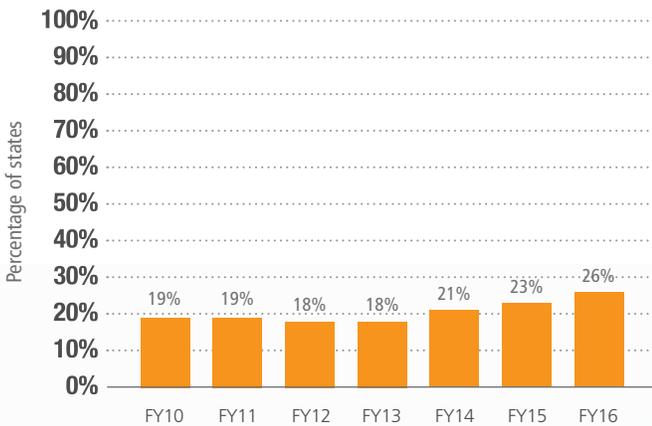
## Workforce Development

State health agencies are committed to workforce development and investing in state health agency employees, despite having limited resources. More than half (59%) of the human resources directors at state health agencies surveyed indicated that an agency workforce development plan that addresses staff training needs and core competency development had been developed. Half of state health agencies also report having a designated workforce development director.

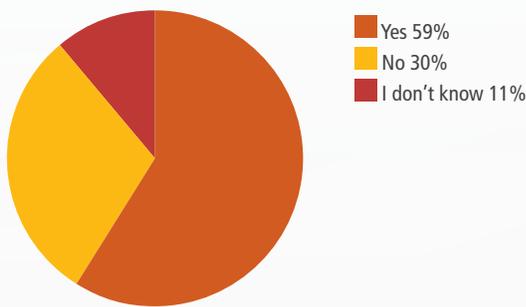
Percentage of Vacant Positions



**Percentage of Full-Time Equivalent Staff Eligible for Retirement, FY 2010 – FY 2016 (n=27)**



**Existence of a Workforce Development Plan, 2012 (n=46)**



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**Additional Information**

For additional information on state health agency workforce, including additional occupational classifications, salary information, and usage of core competencies, as well as data on many more topics, please refer to the *ASTHO Profile of State Public Health, Volume Three*, available at [www.astho.org/profile](http://www.astho.org/profile). The Profile is the only comprehensive source of information about state public health agency activities, structure, and resources. Launched in 2007 and fielded every two to three years, the Profile Survey aims to define the scope of state public health services, identify variations in practice among state health agencies, and contribute to the development of best practices in governmental public health.

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